



21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS PROGRAM (21st CCLC)

Questions and Answers

(21st CCLC Application Information)

Indiana Department of Education

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21st Century Community Learning Centers Program
Questions and Answers
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FAQ and Answers- 21st CCLC

Is a local applicant eligible to apply for a grant if it has no prior after-school experience?

Organizations do not have to demonstrate prior experience in providing after-school programs to be eligible to apply for a grant. However, in its application to the Indiana Department of Education, an organization that does not have such experience must demonstrate promise of success in providing educational and related activities that will complement and enhance the academic performance, achievement, and positive youth development of the students.

What must a local organization include in its application?

The Indiana Department of Education will award grants to eligible organizations on a competitive basis in accordance with the statute. Applications must include descriptions of:

- Before- and after- school or summer recess activities to be funded;
- How students will travel safely to and from the center and home;
- How the organization will disseminate information about the center (including its location) to the community in a manner that is understandable and accessible;
- How the activities are expected to improve student achievement;
- Federal, State, and local programs that will be combined or coordinated with the proposed program for the most effective use of public resources;
- How the program will meet the following principles of effectiveness by being based on:
 - An assessment of objective data regarding need for the before- and after-school programs (including during summer recess periods) and activities in the schools and communities;
 - An established set of performance measures aimed at ensuring the availability of high-quality academic enrichment opportunities; and
 - If appropriate, scientifically based research that provides evidence that the program or activity will help students meet State and local student academic achievement standards;
- The partnership between a local educational agency, a community-based organization, and another public or private organization (if appropriate);
- An evaluation of the community needs and available resources for the community learning center and a description of how the proposed program in the center will address those needs (including the needs of working families);
- The eligible organization's experience, or promise of success, in providing educational and related activities that will complement and enhance the academic performance, achievement, and positive youth development of students; and
- How the applicant will use qualified seniors to serve as volunteers, if the applicant plans to do so.

Further, each application must contain assurances that:

- The program will take place in a safe and easily accessible facility;
- The program was developed and will be carried out in active collaboration with the schools the students attend;
- The program will primarily target students who attend schools eligible for Title I school wide programs and their families;
- Funds under the program will be used to increase the level of State, local and other non-Federal funds that would, in the absence of these Federal funds, be made available for authorized programs and activities, and will not supplant Federal, State, local, or non-Federal funds;
- The community was given notice of the applicant's intent to submit an application; and
- After the submission, the applicant will provide for public availability and review of the application and any waiver request.

The application must also include a preliminary plan for continuation of the center after Federal funding ends.

Is collaboration a requirement for LEAs and other public or private organizations eligible to apply?

The legislation contains several provisions about the importance of collaboration. Section 4204(b)(2)(H) requires districts applying for local grants to provide a description of the partnership between a local educational agency, a community-based organization (CBO), and other public or private organizations, if appropriate. If the local applicant is another public or private organization, it must provide an assurance that its program was developed and will be carried out in active collaboration with the schools the students attend. In addition, Section 4204(i)(1)(B) requires that States give priority to applications submitted jointly by an LEA receiving Title I funds and a CBO or other agency proposing to serve students in schools in need of improvement under Section 1116. As noted in F-4, SEAs must provide the same priority to LEAs proposing to target schools in need of improvement but demonstrate an inability to partner with a CBO within reasonable geographic proximity and of sufficient quality.

By bringing together community organizations with school districts, centers can take advantage of multiple resources in the community. Community learning centers can offer residents in the community an opportunity to volunteer their time and their expertise to help students achieve academic standards and master new skills. Collaboration can also ensure that the children attending a learning center benefit from the collective resources and expertise throughout the community.

Experience & Practice

Effective partnerships within the community allow for more efficient use of local resources. Collaboration among diverse partners strengthens the variety of services the community can offer. For example, community learning centers that partner with a county hospital, the local church, and a printing company in the community might more easily offer health care information, have church volunteers serving snacks for the program, and promote the program with free copying services.

May a community learning center be located or take place outside of a school?

Yes. A community learning center can be located in a facility other than an elementary or secondary school. However, the alternate facility must be at least as available and accessible to the participants as if the program were located in an elementary or secondary school. (Note: “elementary school” and “secondary school” are defined in ESEA as any “nonprofit institutional day or residential school, including a public charter school...”)

Whether the program takes place in a school building or other facility, the applicant must address how students will travel safely to and from the community learning center and home.

Are there any requirements for the hours of operation of a center or the number of students a local program must serve?

No. The statute does not mention specific hours of operation or minimum or maximum numbers of students a center must serve. The statute does, however, specify that community learning centers must offer services during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session, including before school, after school, evenings, weekends and during the summer. Each community should base its application on the needs of its students and their families.

Experience & Practice

The majority of community learning centers funded directly by the U.S. Department of Education are open at least 15 hours per week. Research suggests that more time spent in engaged and sustained learning activities yields greater benefits. To ensure that children have ample extended learning time, the USDOE believes that, based on their analyses of 21st CCLC and other after-school program evaluation data, centers should be open three hours a day and at least four days a week. To best serve the children of working families, centers should consider establishing consistent and dependable hours of operation.

Can grants be awarded to schools that already receive Federal 21st CCLC program funds?

Yes. Communities that presently have a grant from the U.S. Department of Education are eligible to receive additional funds under the State-administered program. However, local applicants should be aware that new funds must be used in a manner consistent with all the requirements of the new statute and must be used only to supplement, not supplant, any Federal,

State or local dollars available to support activities allowable under the 21st CCLC program. Funds may be used to expand or enhance current activities, or to establish programs in non-participating schools within an LEA that has a 21st CCLC grant. School districts that have received 21st CCLC awards that have ended, or are ending this year, may apply to the State for funds to continue those programs. The supplanting provision does not prohibit Federal funds from being used to continue programs where a previous Federal grant has ended.

May 21st CCLC program funds support communities that are already implementing before- and after-school activities?

Yes. 21st CCLC funds may be used to expand and enhance current activities provided in existing after-school programs, whether supported by public or private funds. For example, a grantee may use funds to align activities to help students meet local and State academic standards if those services are not part of the current after-school program. Again, grantees must bear in mind that 21st CCLC funds can be used only to supplement and not supplant any Federal or non-Federal funds used to support current programs.

Are religious organizations, including entities such as religious private schools, eligible to receive 21st CCLC grants?

Yes. Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are eligible to apply for local grants provided they meet all statutory and regulatory requirements of this program. In order to ensure that a local grantee, including a FBO, meets the program's purposes and criteria, it should not discriminate against beneficiaries on the basis of religion. In matters of program eligibility, the Indiana Department of Education may not discriminate against grant applicants with regard to religion. Thus, faith-based and community-based organizations are encouraged to apply for local grants on the same basis as other applicants.

Funds shall be used solely for the purposes set forth in this grant program. No funds provided pursuant to this program shall be expended to support religious practices, such as religious instruction, worship, or prayer. FBOs may offer such practices, but not as part of the program receiving assistance, and FBOs should comply with generally applicable cost accounting requirements to ensure that funds are not used to support these activities. For example, FBOs may wish to keep grant funds in a separate account or accounts to ensure that they are not used inappropriately. OMB Circulars A-21 (for educational institutions) and A-122 (for non-profit organizations) provide further guidance regarding these accounting requirements.

Are private school students eligible to participate in 21st CCLC activities carried out in public schools?

Yes. Students, teachers, and other educational personnel are eligible to participate in 21st CCLC programs on an equitable basis. A public school or other public or private organization that is awarded a grant must provide equitable services to private school students, and their families, if those students are part of the target population.

May several organizations form a consortium to apply for 21st CCLC funds?

Yes. Communities or organizations may apply together to share resources, so long as statutory requirements are met.

Can the Indiana Department of Education reserve their first-year funding, or a portion of their funding, to support current Federal 21st CCLC grantees whose programs are ending?

No. States must distribute all their funds for local grants via a competitive process. Previous Federal grantees can compete for new grants, but cannot be guaranteed that they will receive a grant.

How does the legislative requirement for a minimum award of \$50,000 per grant apply to a consortium of organizations?

The minimum grant award is \$50,000 per year regardless of how many organizations take part in the consortium. However, one organization must be designated as the fiscal agent on behalf of all members of the consortium.

Are public charter schools eligible to participate in the 21st CCLC program?

Yes. Under State law, charter schools are local educational agencies. As such, public charter schools are eligible to be considered for support on the same basis as other LEAs in the State.

Whether or not a charter school applies for a grant, students who attend charter schools may participate in 21st CCLC programs established through an application submitted by other organizations.

Can 21st CCLC program funds support services to adults?

Yes. Adult family members of students participating in a community learning center may participate in educational services or activities appropriate for adults. In particular, local programs may offer services to support parental involvement and family literacy. Services may be provided to families of students to advance the students' academic achievement. However, programs are open only to those adults who are members of the families of participating children.

Can 21st CCLC program funds support services for pre-kindergarten children?

Yes. Although “students” are designated in statute as the intended beneficiaries of the program, the Indiana Department of Education believes that younger children who will become students in the schools being served can also participate in program activities designed to get them ready to succeed in school.

Several civil rights laws apply to recipients of Federal grants. Do these laws apply to private organizations that receive a grant under this program?

Yes, these laws apply to recipients of federal financial assistance, whether they are public or private. They include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination based on race, color, or national origin; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which bars discrimination based on gender; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which bars discrimination based on disability; and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. Section 9534 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in effect provides that nothing in that Act disturbs the application of these laws. By the same token, the Act does not alter the applicability of other non-discrimination laws that are unrelated to the receipt of federal funds (such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which forbids employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, but also contains certain exceptions).

What flexibility does a local educational agency have in its uses of 21st CCLC program funds?

Generally, an LEA – or any other grantee – must use its 21st CCLC funds to provide after-school enrichment programs as described in its applications. However, the reauthorized ESEA provides some flexibility in how 21st CCLC funds can be used at the local level for grantees that are LEAs.

- *Consolidation of Local Administration Funds.* With approval from the Indiana Department of Education, LEAs may consolidate administrative funds with any other administrative funds available from ESEA programs, consistent with the administrative provisions established for each program. Such consolidation may enhance the effective and coordinated use of administrative funds under the consolidated programs.
- *Schoolwide programs.* LEAs are permitted to consolidate and use funds under Part A of Title I together with 21st CCLC and other ESEA program funds received at the school to upgrade the entire educational program of a school that serves an eligible school attendance area. (A school in which not less than 40 percent of the children are from low-income families is eligible for “schoolwide” status.) However, local schools are still responsible for implementing activities for which they received the 21st CCLC award.
- *Rural Education Initiatives.* LEAs eligible for the Small, Rural School Achievement program may use their “applicable funding” (funds received under the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants, Educational Technology State Grants, State Grants for Innovative Programs, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program) to

carry out activities authorized under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Title I, Part A, Title III, or any of these particular programs.

Can 21st CCLC activities take place during the regular school day?

No. The statute specifically indicates services are to be provided outside the regular school day, that is, before school, after school, evenings, weekends, or summer. The program may offer services to students during normal school hours on days when school is not in session, e.g., school holidays or teacher professional development days.

However, activities targeting pre-kindergarten children and adult family members may take place during regular school hours, as these times may be the most suitable for serving these populations.

Can the 21st CCLC local grantees work with other Federal, State and local programs that have related purposes?

Yes. Local programs are strongly encouraged to identify other sources of related funding and to describe, in their applications, how all of these resources will be combined or coordinated to offer a high-quality, sustainable program. Each local application must identify Federal, State, and local programs that also offer after-school services and that will be combined or coordinated with the proposed program to make the most effective use of public resources. See question B-5 for examples.

How does 21st CCLC fit within the broader context of a school's improvement plan?

A 21st CCLC program can be an important component in a school improvement plan, particularly as it offers extended learning time to help children meet State and local academic standards. Local programs must ensure that the academic services they provide are aligned with the school's curriculum in the core subject areas.

Can a local grantee charge the 21st CCLC grant for costs incurred after the grant period?

An organization that receives a 21st CCLC grant may use 21st CCLC funds for allowable costs only during the grant award period. For example, a grantee is free to enter into a multi-year contract with a service provider; however, 21st CCLC funds may only be used for allowable costs related to that contract occurring within the grant award period.

May a local grantee use 21st CCLC program funds to pay or reimburse a proposal-writing firm for developing its grant application?

According to OMB Circular A-87 (Proposal Costs), the costs of preparing proposals for potential Federal awards are allowable, so long as the USDOE approves the expense. However, the Department rarely approves such requests. When proposal costs are approved, they are normally treated as indirect costs and not charged directly to the grant.

Must community learning centers provide services free of charge?

No. However, programs must be equally accessible to all students targeted for services, regardless of their ability to pay. Programs that charge fees may not prohibit any family from participating due to its financial situation. The priority of the program to serve poor students and families could be compromised through high program fees. Programs that opt to charge fees must offer a sliding scale of fees and scholarships for those who cannot afford the program. Income collected from fees must be used to fund program activities specified in the grant application.

What is scientifically based research?

Scientifically based research, as defined in Title IX of the reauthorized ESEA, is research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs. This means research that: (1) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; (2) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; (3) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators; (4) is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment, experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls; (5) ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; (6) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

When is scientifically based research appropriate for the 21st CCLC program?

When providing services in core academic areas where scientifically based research has been conducted and is available – such as reading and mathematics – a community learning center should employ strategies based on such research. The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with other agencies, will continue to identify programs and practices based on rigorous scientific research and will ensure that such information is made widely available. The Indiana Department of Education will provide professional development in practices and strategies that have been proven effective and will encourage local programs to do the same.

How does one plan an effective afterschool program?

The publication *Beyond the Bell: A toolkit for Creating Afterschool Programs* is available online at www.ncrel.org/after/bellkit.htm. *Beyond the Bell*, highly recommended by the U.S. Department of Education, is a timely and helpful publication to assist afterschool program staff to plan and make good decisions in six critical areas: management, collaboration, programming, integration with the traditional school day, evaluation, and communication. While the primary utility of the *Toolkit* is for afterschool programs already in existence, it can be extremely valuable for those in the planning stages as well.